

HONORING D.C.'S 2022 GREEN
RIBBON SCHOOLS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 6, 2022

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating two District of Columbia schools on being recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as Green Ribbon Schools.

For the past 11 years, the Department of Education has recognized schools for their sustainability practices. Since 2011, 11 schools in the District have been recognized as Green Ribbon Schools. This year, J.G. Whittier Elementary School and American University were selected as Green Ribbon Schools.

J.G. Whittier Elementary School, located in Manor Park in Northwest D.C., was established in 1926 and serves 324 students in grades K–8. The school recently held a Sustainability Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Day, which allowed students to learn about sustainability and the effect that we have on the environment, as well as to engage in project-based activities connecting their learning. I applaud J.G. Whittier Elementary School for its recognition as a Green Ribbon School.

Located in Spring Valley in Northwest D.C., American University helps students to learn, research and work to spark positive change in their neighborhood and the world. Established in 1893 by an Act of Congress, American University enrolls 14,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs. American University has a proud history of sustainability, which includes becoming one of the first universities in the Nation to reach carbon neutrality, in 2018. I applaud American University for its recognition as a Green Ribbon School.

Madam Speaker, again, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating J.G. Whittier Elementary School and American University for their recognition as Green Ribbon Schools.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF MARY FRANCINE “MERRI
DEE” DORHAM

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 6, 2022

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of an extraordinary woman, journalist, television broadcast legend, and philanthropist, Mary Francine “Merri Dee” Dorham.

Merri was born in Chicago, Illinois on October 30, 1936. While she grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, she returned to Chicago as a teenager where she graduated from Englewood Technical Prep Academy High School in 1955. After graduating, Merri attended Xavier University in New Orleans, where she was a business administration major. Although she had to drop out to support her siblings, her passion for journalism would land her at WBEE in 1966 and, two years later, Merri began hosting an entertainment program at WCIU on Saturday nights.

In 1971, Merri's popularity on local television resulted in her having her own talk show, “The Merri Dee Show” on independent station, WSNS-Channel 44. That year, Merri faced a personal tragedy when she and a talk show guest were kidnapped from the television station and nearly killed. She survived this horrendous incident and made it her life's mission to advocate for victims of gun violence. She lobbied state and local public officials in passing Illinois' first victims' bill of rights, which would become a model for other states.

In 1972, Merri became an anchor for WGN-TV's 9 p.m. newscast, becoming the first African American lead anchor for a news station in a major U.S. city. For the next three decades, she would play a pivotal role at the station as a senior leader, including serving as WGN's Community Relations Director. In this capacity, Merri was a liaison between the station and the many social and community organizations around town and managed multiple public service campaigns, including hosting

countless broadcasts of the legendary Bud Billiken Parade, the nation's largest and longest running African American parade, annually attended by one million onlookers and two thousand parade participants.

Merri's philanthropic commitment was consistent beyond her professional career. She participated in several charities and organizations including the Chicago-based program Athletes for a Better Education—a charity she founded. She was a yearly fixture as television host for the United Negro College Fund's “Evening of Stars” for nearly two decades, in addition to hosting numerous telethons for the Easterseals.

Throughout the next 40 years, Merri would spotlight her love for children through several on-air segments, including “The Waiting Child,” which focused on children in the foster system in need of an adoptive home. Her impact was recognized by then-Illinois Governor Jim Edgar, who recognized her with a commendation in 1998 for helping to increase state adoptions by more than 50 percent. Her hard work and dedication also earned her the Adoption Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2004.

Merri Dee was a trailblazer in the world of broadcast journalism for young Black women paving a path for increasing diversity in newsrooms. She was a committed mentor, an author, and devoted leader in her community led by her faith, forgiveness, and grace. A recipient of countless awards and accolades, she was inducted in the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame and served as the president of Illinois' AARP chapter. She was an incredible leader; a compassionate; a kind professional and gloriously gifted friend with a broad, welcoming million-dollar smile.

Her loss is deeply felt in Chicago, the Nation, and across the entire world. My thoughts and prayers are with her family, loved ones, and to all who were impacted by her wonderful spirit.